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USDA FOR FAS/FAA/YOUNG, USDA/ARS/MICHELE WILLIAMS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [EAGR](#) [NZ](#)

SUBJECT: VANDEMARK -NEW ZEALAND COUNTRY CLEARANCE

REF USDA FAS 679934

11. Embassy grants country clearance to George Vandemark, Research Geneticist, USDA/ARS/PWA/Washington to visit Queenstown, New Zealand from September 1-9, 2006 to Speak at the Australasian soilborne disease symposium.

12. Embassy understands that country clearance is the only assistance required.

13. Point of contact at the American Embassy is the office of Foreign Agricultural Service, USDA. Their contact details are:

Atn: Katherine Hadda, Political Officer
Tel: 64-4-462-6012
Fax: 64-4-462-6016
Email: agwellington(at)usda.gov

14. Travelers can exchange currency at the airport upon arrival and ATM machines are readily available throughout New Zealand. Check cashing privileges at the Embassy are restricted to traveler's checks only upto US100.00. Personal checks will not be accepted.

15. Visitors should use local taxi service, which is generally safe, reliable and frequent. Taxi fare from the airport to downtown Wellington hotels is approximately NZD30.00. A commercial shuttle service is also offered at the airport. Taxi fare from the airport to downtown Auckland hotels is approximately NZD55-NZD65. A commercial shuttle service is also offered at the Auckland airport.

16. Travelers can exchange currency at the airport upon arrival and ATM machines are readily available throughout New Zealand. Check cashing privileges at the Embassy are limited to traveler's checks only up to USD 300.00 daily. Personal checks will not be accepted.

17. Biosecurity Fines:

The Government of New Zealand instituted fines for non-declared biosecurity hazards on travelers entering New Zealand with undeclared plant, animal or food material. Travelers found carrying these undeclared items will be immediately fined NZD200.00 (USD150.00). Biosecurity is a serious issue in New Zealand and fines will be administered immediately and without warnings.

18. Security Information:

a. All U.S. citizen personnel serving under the Chief of

Mission authority in a temporary status of 30 days or more must complete appropriate overseas personal security training prior to travel (04 State 66580). Employees who have completed the Security Overseas Seminar course at the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) after June 1, 2000, meet this requirement. All other TDY personnel must either (1) complete the approved seminar at FSI entitled "Serving Abroad for Families & Employees" (SAFE), or (2) have their agency certify to the Department of State's Bureau of Diplomatic Security that the employee has undergone equivalent security training. The contact for this training is Assistant Director for Training at (703) 205-2617. Country clearance will not be granted for any traveler with planned TDY in excess of 30 days if this information is not stated/certified. POC for additional information is RSO Wellington.

b. The U.S. Mission in New Zealand currently rates the threat from transnational and indigenous terrorism as low. There are no terrorist groups or support groups believed to be operating in New Zealand at this time. In light of the worldwide security alert all visitors should heighten their security awareness and report any unusual incidents to the Regional Security Officer.

c. Anonymous telephonic threats and obscure threat mail have occasionally targeted U.S. diplomatic missions in New Zealand. In response to U.S. policies and actions, various groups in New Zealand have demonstrated occasionally at the Embassy in Wellington and at the Consulate in Auckland. These demonstrations are usually small and are peacefully conducted. During these demonstrations, the host country police and protective services normally provide adequate protection to the Embassy and Consulate.

d. New Zealand is considered a medium threat crime environment. As such, Wellington and Auckland have experienced an increase in violent and petty crimes, but they are usually non-confrontational in nature. However, home invasion robberies and assaults, once very rare, are becoming more frequent. Burglaries and thefts occur countrywide but primarily in the large cities of Auckland, Christchurch and Wellington, and visitors should be especially aware that street crime, such as scams and pickpockets is a daily occurrence in these cities. Common sense precautions should be taken, especially at night, to avoid becoming a target of opportunity.

e. Generally, New Zealand does not play a significant role in the world drug situation; however, evidence indicates that New Zealand has been utilized as a transit point for shipments of Ecstasy, Heroin and Cocaine to Australia. The most abused drug in New Zealand is locally produced methamphetamine and cannabis. There have been increased amounts of lab seizures and violent crime associated with groups attempting to control this market.

f. All forms of public transportation are generally safe at all times of the day; however, at night visitors should use common sense precautions so as to not become a target of opportunity.

g. The traffic situation in Auckland can be difficult with a moderate amount of congestion. Wellington and Christchurch traffic is significantly better; however, during rush hour moderate delays can be expected. Visitors are advised that traffic drives on the left-hand side of the road. Visitors are advised that traffic accidents are common and that it is safe to pull over so that police may take an accident report. However, visitors who experience hostility or anti-American sentiment should depart the scene immediately and notify the RSO.

h. Precautions should also be taken to not discuss

sensitive or classified information outside secure environments or over unsecured and/or cellular telephones, and to securely safeguard classified or sensitive information at the Chancery and not at hotels or residences.

i. Visitors should also be aware of the State Department's Consular Information sheet for New Zealand and the most recent Worldwide Caution Public Announcements, which are available via the Internet at <http://travel.state.gov>

j. In essence, visitors to New Zealand must exercise appropriate caution and be alert to their surroundings with regard to their personal security. Suspicious incidents/activities should be reported to RSO Wellington (Telephone (64)(4)462-6000, 24 hours/day).

McCORMICK